

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

September 5, 2006

6:15 PM

Chairman Garrity called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen O'Neil, Osborne, Gatsas, Duval

Messr: Robert MacKenzie

Chairman Garrity addressed Item 3 of the agenda.

3. Acceptance of federal funds for the VISTA Volunteer Program.

Chairman Garrity asked who is going to be presenting on that. Is that you, Bob, or Dennis?

Robert MacKenzie, Planning Department, stated I will have some of the information. Dennis is here to answer any of the more technical questions.

Alderman Osborne moved for discussion. Alderman O'Neil duly seconded the motion.

Mr. MacKenzie stated the City had started the VISTA program a couple of years ago. Basically, the program allows the City to get volunteers, qualified volunteers, for a number of jobs throughout the City, both City government and non-profit organizations. They have offered the City now to go into a different mode where we could get quite a few more VISTA volunteers if the City would, in essence, run the program. So, the total amount, I think, is over \$500,000 that the Federal Government would then channel through the City to allow volunteers to be placed through different locations in the City. Then, I'm not sure volunteers is the correct term because technically they do get a stipend. These people get a small living allowance. I think it's 11 to 12 thousand dollars. So this is a ramping up of the VISTA program. The program will actually be changed from under our office to be put under the Mayor's office as part of the actions. And, I'd be happy to answer any other questions, and Dennis is here too.

Alderman O'Neil asked, Bob, with it moving to the Mayor's office, what happens to Dennis and his coordination of the VISTA program?

Mr. MacKenzie responded physically he'd be leading the VISTA. I think the Mayor is looking for alternative locations for him, but he would be part and parcel, he'd be managing the program.

Chairman Garrity asked it's \$539,275 for Federal?

Mr. MacKenzie stated yes.

Chairman Garrity asked what's the Other?

Mr. MacKenzie stated Other is there'll be organizations, non-profits that these are placed at, that will provide a matching, not a fifty-fifty matching, but they'll be providing some funds, so those monies are from other organizations to pay a portion of it.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Osborne a motion to accept the federal funds for the VISTA Volunteer Program was passed.

Chairman O'Neil addressed Item 4 of the agenda.

4. Consideration of final funding for the revaluation program.

Mr. MacKenzie stated the final payments are coming up for the reval consultant. This is roughly...a little bit under \$230,000 that the City has not yet funded, and we were looking for ways to find it without potentially bonding this amount. So we have determined that the best way to do it...we have recently received back a reimbursement from Verizon. If you remember the Bridge Street fire. They're sending back \$550,000 which the City has received. That cash has to be used toward a long term bondable project because it's a reimbursement of a bond. So we're actually swapping through another project. There's a project, Public Works infrastructure, that has some cash into it, so we'd be, in essence, swapping this reimbursement into that program and then the cash would be coming out of there for the reval. Because revals cannot be 20 year bond; they could be five or seven year bond. So that's how we're proposing to fund this final payment, which I think is coming up...Mr. Cornell is here. I think final payment is coming up later this month.

Chairman Garrity asked are there any questions from the committee?

Alderman Gatsas asked, Bob, why wouldn't we take all of the \$550,000 and swap it for the cash, and put the bonding in the project so there's another \$330,000 or \$322,000 that's available to do some other projects?

Mr. MacKenzie stated the money will be there for other projects anyways. We are meeting later this week with the Finance Director and the Fire Chief to look at the total flood damage from this spring. So we were kind of hoping that once we got this money back that it could serve as our local share for that. Again, today we don't have those final tabulations. But I am hoping that the balance of those monies, which is about \$300,000, will then be adequate for our local share of those flood damages.

Alderman Gatsas asked what are you assuming the local share of those flood damages is going to be?

Mr. MacKenzie responded again, we're going to meet on Thursday with the Chief and find out, but I don't know what the total amount is, whether it's \$1 million or \$2 million or two and a half million dollars damage.

Alderman Gatsas asked but why are you assuming that the State is going to do anything different than what they did in the western part of the state?

Mr. MacKenzie responded in the western part of the state, I know you mentioned that before, that there was fairly small amounts, but the City, to my knowledge, has not heard that they would go over. They do have a commitment for a percentage of it. The federal government will pay 80 percent. The State has committed a percentage, but we have not heard that we would come down to...like a zero percent match.

Alderman Gatsas asked where did you hear that the federal government is going to commit to 80 percent?

Mr. MacKenzie stated that is from FEMA, 80 percent of eligible project costs.

Alderman Gatsas asked has that changed since the western part of the state's floods? Because that was 75 percent guaranteed by FEMA.

Mr. MacKenzie stated it is 75 percent. You're correct.

Alderman Gatsas stated so that money is going to be earmarked for that, so it's not going somewhere else.

Mr. MacKenzie stated in the end we believe that money has to be used for a bonded project. I don't think it can go back in to fund a reserve or other things, so the Board will have to commit that to other projects at a later time.

Chairman Garrity asked are there any other questions from the committee?

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Duval, it was moved to approve the proposed plan for final funding for the revaluation program.

There being no further business to come before the committee, on motion of Alderman Duval, duly seconded by Alderman Osborne, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee